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ABSTRACT

This study of the of the Florida Community College System compares Associate of Arts (AA) transfers over a five-year period, from 1994-95 to 1998-99. The study tracked transfers with Florida's centralized student database system, which uses social security numbers as student identifiers. It included only students who completed the AA degree, and specifically looked at transfers in the first year after completion of this degree (although the first cohort, 1994-95, was tracked for the entire five-year period). Results indicated that: (1) the 1994-95 cohort had a first-year transfer rate of 63%; (2) the first-year transfer rate declined to 58% for the last cohort of 1998-99; (3) during 1998-99, Asian, Hispanic, black and white student transfer declined, while Indian transfer increased by less than one percent; (4) more males transferred after earning an AA degree, although more females actually completed the AA degree; and (5) younger students transferred at higher rates than older students did. In addition, when the initial 1994-95 cohort was tracked for five years, results showed that 71% transferred during this period, up 8% from the initial first-year transfer rate. (Contains 11 references and 11 tables.) (LD)

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A Comparison of Associate in Arts Transfer Rates Between 1994-95 and 1998-99

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A Comparison of Associate in Arts Transfer Rates Between 1994-95 and 1998-99

Abstract

The Florida Community College System has a long history of serving both the academic and vocational needs of individual communities. During the past five years there has been a re-structuring of state funds that appears to emphasize the vocational mission of the System at the expense of the academic. There has also been a deliberate effort to bring upper division coursework to community college campuses. This study will attempt to determine if these two trends have impacted the number and characteristics of students transferring during this time period

A Comparison of Associate in Arts Transfer Rates Between 1994-95 and 1998-99

Introduction

The original mission of the community colleges was to be "a two-year extension beyond the twelfth grade [that] would offer an opportunity to complete secondary education allowing the university to begin specialization at the 'junior' year" (Albertson & Wattenarger, 1998, p 21). By the 1930's, this academic mission had been expanded to include vocational training (AACC, 2001). This mission expansion has continued and community colleges have become complex institutions that some individuals have characterized as trying to be "all things to all people." Advocates hail this broad array of services as fully reflecting the needs of a changing society, while critics suggest that core missions such as transfer have been abandoned (Bailey & Averianova, 1999).

The abandonment of the transfer function claim appears to be supported by national trends in enrollments and transfer rates that began a steady decline in the 1960s and 1970s (Ibid.). Nora (2000) reports national estimates of transfer rates from two to four-year colleges of about 15 to 20 percent. Even when an attempt is made to ensure the cohort is limited to "serious" students, the rate is between 20 and 25 percent (Rifken, 1997).

These data, along with the expansion of mission to include contract training, small-business development, and local economic planning, have led some authors to state that the institutional purposes of community colleges have moved from focusing on individual students to focusing on the needs of business and the local economy (Dougherty & Bakia, 2000; Levin, 1999). Dougherty and Bakia (2000) further suggest

that this pursuit of a strong business connection may result in a lost of interest in the traditional task of preparing citizens rather than merely workers.

The belief that community colleges are remaining true to their original mission is bolstered by recent results from the National Transfer Study indicating an increase in the transfer rate and data from Oregon showing increases in the number of students transferring. The National Transfer Study has indicated an increase of three percentage points over the past four years. Data from the 1991 cohort showed a national transfer rate of 22%. By 1995, the rate had increased to 25% (MacNeil, 2001). The percentage of students completing an Oregon Transfer degree one year and then enrolling in an institution in the Oregon University System the following year increased from 48% in 1995-96 to 54% in 1998-99. The headcount also increased, from 895 to 1,037 (OUS, 2000).

The educational requirements for the United States in the new century are varied enough to allow for both aspects of the community college mission. State leaders need to ensure that any artificial barriers to transfer have been dealt with and that policies are in place to address such issues as articulation, common core requirements and common course numbering (ECS, 2001).

The Florida System

The Florida Community College System can trace its roots to a private two-year college in St. Petersburg that opened in 1927. In 1947, the Legislature recommended that junior colleges should become an "operational component" of the local school systems. Even in the early years, the institutions provided a diversity of services that included both the first two years of baccalaureate instruction and occupational education (Albertson and

Wattenbarger, 1998). When the institutions severed their ties with local school systems, half of them became an area technical center as well as a junior/community college.

This dual role continues with all twenty-eight institutions in the System sharing the following mission: "The primary mission and responsibility of public community colleges is responding to community needs for postsecondary academic education and degree career education...(a) Providing lower level undergraduate instruction and awarding associate degrees, (b) Preparing students directly for vocations requiring less than baccalaureate degrees" (Florida statute 240.301 (3) (a) (b)).

The past decade has seen several events that appear to indicate there has been a shift in the major emphasis for the System from the Associate in Arts to the Associate in Science and certificates. In the early 1990's, the Legislature added economic development as a primary mission, and in the mid 1990's all twenty-eight institutions were allowed to offer the full range of vocational programs that had previously been restricted to area technical centers. Beginning in 1997, funding was split between monies allocated for the Community College Program Fund for AA activities and the Workforce Fund for AS, certificates and adult education. All of these changes appear to de-emphasis the traditional transfer role of a community college. Is this merely perception, or has a true shift occurred that has impacted the transfer of AA students from community colleges to the universities?

Research Design

There is a need for data on several aspects of this potentially new focus including the relationship between the expansion of workforce development programs and the traditional areas of transfer preparation, general education and remediation. Over the past

three decades, Florida has developed centralized student level databases for both the community colleges and state universities. Both systems use social security numbers as the student identifier. This has made it possible to follow students from one system to the other.

This study provides a five-year comparison of AA transfers to the State University System the first year following graduation. The individual cohorts are displayed by demographic characteristics, university and major. The demographic characteristics are ethnicity, gender and age. The relative importance of these three characteristics to continuing enrollment has been shown to vary depending upon the initial preparation level (Windham, 1995). This study controls for preparation by tracking only AA graduates.

While the main emphasis will be on the year immediately following graduation, the earliest cohort (1994-95) will be tracked for the entire five-year period to provide a more complete picture of transfer patterns within the State.

Research Questions

1. Has there been a change in the overall percentage of AA graduates transferring to the State University System in the year following graduation in the five years of this study?
2. Have there been changes among selected demographic groups?
3. Does following a cohort for five years rather than one produce different results?
4. If there are differences, are they more pronounced for some demographic groups than others?

Study Results

One-year Follow-up

The number of students tracked in this study varied from 22,338 in the 1994-95 cohort to 28,364 in the 1997-98 cohort (Table 1). During this time, the classes became slightly more female, changing from 57.8% to 60.5%, and slightly more minority, going from 23.6% to 29.6%

The first year following graduation saw 62.9% of the class of 1994-95 enroll in the SUS in 1995-96 (Table 2). By the time of the class of 1998-99, this percentage had declined to 58.1 or a decrease of -7.6%. This decline was evident in all ethnic and gender categories as well as all age groups. The sharpest declines occurred in those students 26 and over at the time they received their AA degree.

The percentage of Asian students transferring declined from 71.1 to 65.7. Hispanic students declined from 64.1% to 58.5%, while black students declined from 62.6% to 55.5%. The percentage of Indians increased from 56.9 to 57.3, but there were only 58 Indian students in the first year of the study and 63 in the final year. The percentage for white students also declined from 62.5 to 57.9.

Although more females than males earn AA degrees, males transfer at higher rates. For the class of 1994-95, the rate for males was 65.8% and for females 60.8% (Table 3). By 1998-99, those rates had changed to 61.0% for males and 56.2% for females.

The relationship between age and transfer was consistent with younger students transferring at higher rates than older students. For the class of 1994-95, 71.7% of those 21 or less transferred compared to 46.3% of those over 45 (Table 4). The class of 1998-

99 had 68.8% of those 21 or less transfer and only 33.6% of those over 45 The over 45 age group had the sharpest decline of any group tracked.

The relative positions of the different universities in terms of where students transfer did not change during this study period. The University of Central Florida received the most transfers, ranging from 19.0% to 21.2% (Table 5). Florida A and M University received the fewest, ranging from 1.4% to 1.7%.

Business Management and Administrative Services was the most popular major throughout the study. The class of 1994-95 had 20.2% of its transfers select that major, while the class of 1998-99 had 23.5% (Table 6). Education was second with 15.0% from the class of 1994-95 and 12.4% for the class of 1998-99. Social Science, Psychology and Health Professions and Related Services occupied third, fourth and fifth places throughout the study, but not always in the same order.

Five-year Follow-up

The second phase of this study was a five-year follow-up on the class of 1994-95 to determine if additional follow-up time would provide a more complete picture of the transfer process. The 1994-95 cohort consisted of 22,338 students (Table 7). Seventy-six point four percent of these students were white, 12.9% were Hispanic, 7.4% black, 2.8% Asian and 0.5% Indian. The majority of the students (57.8%) were female. The biggest difference between AA graduates and the FCCS student body as a whole is in age. Thirty-nine point five percent of the AA graduates were 21 or younger. An additional 28.7% were between 22 and 25. Students 26 to 30 formed 13.9% of the cohort, with 15.4% in the 31 to 45 age group, and 2.4% over 45. FCCS students seeking an AA degree have an average age of 25.

Between 1995-96 and 1999-2000, 15,852 or 71% transferred to the SUS. The ethnic and gender profiles of these transfers were similar to that of the original cohort. Seventy-five point six percent were white, 13.3% were Hispanic, 7.5% black, 3.1% Asian and 0.4% Indian. Females remained the largest gender group at 56.6%, with males at 43.4% (Table 8). The major difference between the original cohort and those that transferred was in age. Forty-four point two percent of the transfers were 21 or less, 28.9% were 22 to 25, 12.2% 26 to 30, 12.9% 31 to 45 and only 1.8% over 45.

Asian students transferred at the highest rate (76.9%) among the identified ethnic groups (Table 9). Hispanic students were second at 73.3% and black students were a very close third at 72.3%. Whites were next at 70.2% and Indians were the final group at 64.7%. The similarities among the major ethnic groups imply that the statewide articulation agreement and other work done to ensure transfer has been equally successful for all groups. In spite of a larger number of women actually earning the AA degree and transferring, a higher percentage of men transferred (73.1) than women (69.4).

Again, age is the differentiating factor for transfer. Seventy-nine point three percent of students 21 or less transferred, 71.4% of those 22 to 25, 62.5% of the 26 to 30 group, 59.4% of those 31 to 45 and only 52.9% of those over 45.

The University of South Florida received the most students. Nineteen point seven percent of the cohort that transferred went to USF (Table 10). The University of Central Florida was second with 19.2%. Florida State University, University of Florida and Florida International University had 13.1%, 12.9% and 12.8% respectively.

Business was chosen as a major by 20.1% of those transferring (Table 11). Education was second with 14.7%. The areas of Social Science and Health had 7.7% and

7.1% respectively. The only other areas with more than five percent of the total were Psychology (6.8%) and Engineering (5.2%).

Conclusion

The FCCS continues to provide a substantial proportion of the upper division students enrolled in the SUS. Most of these students are AA transfers. However, the percentage of AA graduates transferring immediately to the SUS has declined in the past five years. Two potential reasons for this change are the expanding economy during this time and the impact of the private concurrent use partnerships. The state made a very deliberate decision to welcome both public and private four-year institutions onto community college campuses. Surveys have shown that thousands of students are enrolled in these programs, but there is no centralized data system that would provide the information necessary to track a given cohort of AA graduates.

By five years following graduation, 71% of the class of 1994-95 had enrolled in the SUS. This percentage is very similar to the 72.4 of an earlier study based upon the 1991-92 cohort. All of the major ethnic groups are transferring at approximately the same rate. A higher percentage of males than females transferred and younger students transferred more often than older students did. The urban universities located in Tampa (USF) and Orlando (UCF) received the most students. Business and Education were the majors chosen most often by this class.

Overall, the transfer rate for Florida community college AA graduates remains high, especially when a cohort is tracked for five years. The decline in transfers in the year immediately following graduation may be due as much to the proliferation of

concurrent-use programs with private colleges as to any increased emphasis on vocational programs at the community colleges. Until a centralized database for these public-private partnerships becomes available, it is impossible to accurately determine the reason for the apparent decline.

Table 1
One year Follow-up AA Graduates

	Total	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Indian	White	NR	Female	Male
1994-95	22,338	632	1,646	2,874	102	17,061	23	12,917	9,421
	100.0%	2.8%	7.4%	12.9%	0.5%	76.4%	0.1%	57.8%	42.2%
1995-96	23,711	737	1,814	3,077	92	17,962	29	13,707	10,002
	100.0%	3.1%	7.7%	13.0%	0.4%	75.8%	0.1%	57.8%	42.2%
1996-97	25,355	934	2,143	3,806	144	18,302	26	14,807	10,543
	100.0%	3.7%	8.5%	15.0%	0.6%	72.2%	0.1%	58.4%	41.6%
1997-98	28,364	1,108	2,873	4,306	152	19,891	34	17,112	11,251
	100.0%	3.9%	10.1%	15.2%	0.5%	70.1%	0.1%	60.3%	39.7%
1998-99	25,746	1,026	2,608	3,835	110	18,134	33	15,577	10,167
	100.0%	4.0%	10.1%	14.9%	0.4%	70.4%	0.1%	60.5%	39.5%

Table 2
One year Follow-up Percent of AA Transfers
By Ethnicity

	Total	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Indian	White	NR
1994-95	62.9%	71.1%	62.6%	64.1%	56.9%	62.5%	73.9%
1995-96	61.9%	67.0%	61.0%	64.5%	58.7%	61.4%	69.0%
1996-97	60.3%	68.1%	59.4%	60.6%	63.6%	60.0%	42.3%
1997-98	57.5%	64.7%	54.7%	57.8%	50.0%	57.4%	50.0%
1998-99	58.1%	65.7%	55.5%	58.5%	57.3%	57.9%	66.7%

Table 3
One year Follow-up of AA Transfers
By Gender

	Female	Male
1994-95	60.8%	65.8%
1995-96	59.9%	64.6%
1996-97	58.4%	63.1%
1997-98	55.2%	61.0%
1998-99	56.2%	61.0%

Table 4
One year Follow-up of AA Transfers
By Age

	21 or Less	22 to 25	26 to 30	31 to 45	Over 45
1994-95	71.7%	62.5%	54.3%	51.6%	46.3%
1995-96	70.5%	61.7%	54.4%	51.2%	42.9%
1996-97	69.4%	59.7%	53.5%	49.0%	38.7%
1997-98	68.2%	58.4%	49.2%	44.7%	36.2%
1998-99	68.8%	59.2%	49.5%	44.0%	33.6%

Table 5
One Year follow-up of AA Transfers
By University

		FAMU	FAU	FGCU	FIU	FSU	UCF	UF	UNF	USF	UWF	Total
1994-95	Total	237	1,166	0	1,758	1,958	2,673	1,880	941	2,715	732	14,055
	Percent	1.7%	8.3%	0.0%	12.5%	13.9%	19.0%	13.4%	6.7%	19.3%	5.2%	100.0%
1995-96	Total	249	1,239	0	1,777	1,930	2,897	2,152	927	2,831	679	14,681
	Percent	1.7%	8.4%	0.0%	12.1%	13.1%	19.7%	14.7%	6.3%	19.3%	4.6%	100.0%
1996-97	Total	237	1,339	177	1,985	1,856	3,121	2,348	986	2,583	666	15,298
	Percent	1.5%	8.8%	1.2%	13.0%	12.1%	20.4%	15.3%	6.4%	16.9%	4.4%	100.0%
1997-98	Total	244	1,737	335	2,079	1,903	3,224	2,245	1,060	2,796	674	16,297
	Percent	1.5%	10.7%	2.1%	12.8%	11.7%	19.8%	13.8%	6.5%	17.2%	4.1%	100.0%
1998-99	Total	215	1,441	307	1,755	1,824	3,175	2,107	1,028	2,453	649	14,954
	Percent	1.4%	9.6%	2.1%	11.7%	12.2%	21.2%	14.1%	6.9%	16.4%	4.3%	100.0%

Table 6
One Year Follow-up of AA Transfers
By Major

	1994-95		1995-96		1996-97		1997-98		1998-99	
Major	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
None Reported	446	3.2%	447	3.0%	430	2.8%	497	3.0%	442	3.0%
Agriculture Business & Pro.	24	0.2%	25	0.2%	28	0.2%	36	0.2%	34	0.2%
Agriculture Science	111	0.8%	129	0.9%	137	0.9%	145	0.9%	117	0.8%
Cons. & Renewable Res.	61	0.4%	97	0.7%	97	0.6%	109	0.7%	93	0.6%
Architecture & Related Pro.	54	0.4%	80	0.5%	99	0.6%	86	0.5%	104	0.7%
Area, Ethic and Cultural St.	16	0.1%	11	0.1%	14	0.1%	11	0.1%	8	0.1%
Communications	653	4.6%	661	4.5%	704	4.6%	815	5.0%	795	5.3%
Computer and Info. Sc.	397	2.8%	380	2.6%	481	3.1%	568	3.5%	558	3.7%
Education	2,110	15.0%	2,139	14.6%	2,242	14.7%	2,097	12.9%	1,850	12.4%
Engineering	754	5.4%	798	5.4%	862	5.6%	913	5.6%	829	5.5%
Engineering- Related Tech.	99	0.7%	94	0.6%	114	0.7%	113	0.7%	97	0.6%
Foreign Languages & Lit.	57	0.4%	71	0.5%	67	0.4%	68	0.4%	63	0.4%
Vocational Home Economics	146	1.0%	160	1.1%	161	1.1%	149	0.9%	124	0.8%
Law	70	0.5%	91	0.6%	67	0.4%	62	0.4%	88	0.6%
English Language & Lit.	435	3.1%	443	3.0%	437	2.9%	483	3.0%	435	2.9%
Liberal Arts & Sc./Gen. St.	251	1.8%	218	1.5%	283	1.8%	367	2.3%	352	2.4%
Library Science	0	0.0%	15	0.1%	23	0.2%	59	0.4%	75	0.5%
Biological Sciences/Life Sc.	649	4.6%	653	4.4%	634	4.1%	631	3.9%	559	3.7%
Mathematics	90	0.6%	86	0.6%	70	0.5%	63	0.4%	68	0.5%
Multi/Interdiscipline Studies	136	1.0%	133	0.9%	108	0.7%	112	0.7%	70	0.5%
Parks, Rec., Leisure & Fit.	76	0.5%	103	0.7%	94	0.6%	79	0.5%	105	0.7
Philosophy and Religion	53	0.4%	56	0.4%	54	0.4%	34	0.2%	45	0.3%
Physical Sciences	189	1.3%	155	1.1%	163	1.1%	174	1.1%	128	0.9%
Psychology	987	7.0%	1,001	6.8%	1,028	6.7%	1,083	6.6%	1,022	6.8%
Protective Services	652	4.6%	673	4.6%	626	4.1%	703	4.3%	636	4.3%
Public Admin. & Services	337	2.4%	315	2.1%	316	2.1%	385	2.4%	342	2.3%
Social Science & History	1,143	8.1%	1,098	7.5%	1,123	7.3%	1,132	6.9%	987	6.6%
Visual & Performance Arts	342	2.4%	372	2.5%	394	2.6%	459	2.8%	454	3.0%
Health Professions & Related Sciences	883	6.3%	1,078	7.3%	1,083	7.1%	1,176	7.2%	954	6.4%
Business Management & Admin. Services	2,834	20.2%	3,099	21.1%	3,359	22.0%	3,688	22.6%	3,520	23.5%
Total	14,055	100.%	14,681	100.%	15,298	100.%	16,297	100.%	14,954	100.%

Table 7
Five-year Follow-up 1994-95 AA Graduates
Original Cohort

		Ethnicity					
	Total	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Indian	White	NR
Number	22,338	623	1646	2874	102	17061	23
Percent	100.0%	2.8%	7.4%	12.9%	0.5%	76.4%	0.1%

	Gender	
	Female	Male
Number	12917	9421
Percent	57.8%	42.2%

	Age				
	21 or Less	22 to 25	26 to 30	31 to 45	Over 45
Number	8831	6411	3104	3446	546
Percent	39.5%	28.7%	13.9%	15.4%	2.4%

Table 8
Five-year Follow-up 1994-95 AA Graduates
Transfers into SUS at any time between 1995-96 and 1999-2000

		Ethnicity					
	Total	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Indian	White	NR
Number	15,852	486	1,190	2,107	66	11,984	19
Percent	100.0%	3.1%	7.5%	13.3%	0.4%	75.6%	0.1%

	Gender	
	Female	Male
Number	8,967	6,885
Percent	56.6%	43.4%

	Age				
	21 or Less	22 to 25	26 to 30	31 to 45	Over 45
Number	6,999	4,575	1,941	2,048	289
Percent	44.2%	28.9%	12.2%	12.9%	1.8%

Table 9
Five-year Follow-up
Percent of AA Transfers to the SUS

		Ethnicity					
	Total	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Indian	White	NR
Number	15,852	486	1,190	2,107	66	11,984	19
Percent	71.0%	76.9%	72.3%	73.3%	64.7%	70.2%	82.6%

	Gender	
	Female	Male
Number	8,967	6,885
Percent	69.4%	73.1%

	Age				
	21 or Less	22 to 25	26 to 30	31 to 45	Over 45
Number	6,999	4,575	1,941	2,048	289
Percent	79.3%	71.4%	62.5%	59.4%	52.9%

Table 10
Five-year Follow-up
By University

	FAMU	FAU	FGCU	FIU	FSU	UCF	UF	UNF	USF	UWF	**Total**
Number	257	1,348	26	2,036	2,069	3,048	2,044	1,079	3,115	830	15,852
Percent	1.6%	8.5%	0.2%	12.8%	13.1%	19.2%	12.9%	6.8%	19.7%	5.2%	100.0%

Table 11
Five-year Follow-up
By Major

Major	Number	Percent
None Reported	664	4.2%
Agriculture Business and Production	26	0.2%
Agriculture Science	119	0.8%
Conservation and Renewable Natural Resources	74	0.5%
Architecture and Related Programs	59	0.4%
Area, Ethic and Cultural Studies	16	0.1%
Communications	704	4.4%
Computer and Information Science	447	2.8%
Education	2,338	14.7%
Engineering	829	5.2%
Engineering- Related Technologies	107	0.7%
Foreign Languages and Literature/Letters	62	0.4%
Vocational Home Economics	151	1.0%
Law	85	0.5%
English Language and Literature/Letters	479	3.0%
Liberal Arts & Sciences, General Studies and Humanities	324	2.0%
Library Science	2	0.0%
Biological Sciences/Life Sciences	715	4.5%
Mathematics	97	0.6%
Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies	159	1.0%
Parks, Recreation, Leisure and Fitness Studies	84	0.5%
Philosophy and Religion	60	0.4%
Physical Sciences	205	1.3%
Psychology	1,071	6.8%
Protective Services	702	4.4%
Public Administration and Services	366	2.3%
Social Science and History	1,222	7.7%
Visual and Performance Arts	375	2.4%
Health Professions and related Sciences	1,121	7.1%
Business Management and Administrative Services	3,189	20.1%
Total	15,852	100.0%

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